



CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN MINDANAO

BARANGAY JUSTICE SERVICE SYSTEM (BJSS)

BACKGROUND/HISTORY

The USAID-assisted **Barangay Justice Service System (BJSS)**, with a grant to the Gerry Roxas Foundation, focuses on the effectiveness of the Katarungang Pambarangay to prevent indiscriminate filing of cases in the courts and lower government expenses. Six years ago, the backlog of court cases was a little more than half a million. The backlog grew to a million cases by the year 2000.

The Project carried out three overlapping phases over more than three years. It is now in its fourth phase for expanded national replication. Phase I covering Panay and Guimaras Islands mobilized civil society and local government support at the barangay, municipal and provincial levels. Phase II focussed on developing participatory activity implementation and evaluation, from which innovative strategies to improve barangay justice were implemented in pilot barangays. In Phase III, BJSS models were developed and used in nationwide replication in collaboration with the various Centers of Local Governance (CLGs).

The Phase IV of the Project, which was recently approved by USAID and NEDA/ICC for expanded national replication, will capitalize on its network of partners in national and local governments, civil society, academe and the private sector to bring together an extraordinary set of key actors with complementary experiences, skills and linkages. Phase IV will cover 89 barangays for its nationwide replication. Of these target barangays, 37 or 42% are in Mindanao, including 17 in Marawi City, 5 each in Lanao del Norte and Iligan City, and 2 each in Davao provinces and cities and Conval Province. Under the overall GRF administration, project implementation will be handled by the Mindanao CLGs: Mindanao State University-Iligan, Mindanao State University-Marawi, and Ateneo de Davao University.

The implementation of the Project's Phase IV in Mindanao will be formally launched in April 2002, including signing of Memorandum of Agreement by the Department of Justice (DOJ), Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), and GRF. USAID will act as witness to the Agreement.

The DOJ, in pursuant to its mandate, has identified the Katarungang Pambarangay (Barangay Justice System) as its project for people empowerment towards the attainment of justice and as a means of declogging the courts. It has also the legal expertise which can be tapped for a community-based Barangay Justice strengthening program in partnership with other sectors engaged in promoting innovative approaches in dispute resolution.

The DILG, under the Local Government Code, is mandated to provide a system of granting incentives to Barangay Justice Council members who adequately demonstrate the ability of judiciously and expeditiously resolve cases referred to them. they also have the expertise, skilled manpower and networks to exercise its functions relative to strengthening Barangay Justice.

The GRF is a CLG and an NGO involved in local governance, democracy, judicial reform, health, and women in development. Under the BJSS Project, the GRF innovated the participation of Barangay Justice Advocates who are volunteers trained to assist the community as the link to a network of integrated justice services.

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